

LAY PARTICIPATION IN WORSHIP CREATION:  
THE SECULAR MEETS THE SACRED

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## ABSTRACT

In the search for a valid, exciting process of liturgical renewal the process of group interaction has many possibilities. This project seeks to develop lay participation in worship creation as an historical, theological and practical necessity for a meaningful contemporary worship experience. This means lay involvement in the whole process of inspiration, creation, and celebration of worship.

This project starts with an examination of the present day disaffection with meaningful worship acts and symbols. The second chapter is a short historical survey of the Early Christians, the Reformers and the Colonial Methodist styles of worship. Chapter three explores some theological understandings of worship and chapter four describes a structure of worship that reflects these understandings. In the last chapter a workshop is proposed to help lay people come to terms with this process of worship creation while the prelude draws some specific conclusions for the Methodist Church.

It is hoped that this project gives courage to worship leaders to allow more involvement by the congregation. It is not a case for any style of worship, but merely a process to allow greater input into any style.

Footnotes and Bibliographical material are found at the end of this project. Where some additional content notes are needed to clarify the text, a footnote will be found at the bottom of the page it refers to. The same footnote number is used for the content note as well as for the Bibliographical reference to avoid confusion.

## PRELUDE

Today we are faced with the problem of speaking the Word of God as revealed in Jesus Christ to our rapidly evolving culture. No one can doubt that our American culture has changed. The point of this study is how the Christian Worship service can respond to such changes. We are going to note how worship traditions, rites, and forms which have meaning in one culture become inappropriate when changes occur in that culture. A key to how well worship survives these changes is found in the involvement of the participants.

Ironically, "liturgy," which literally means "people's work," is today largely assumed to be the clergy's work. Meaningful participation has become absent in much of our present-day worship. It is the contention of this project, in view of the current mainline Protestant American worship, that lay involvement is an historical, theological, and practical necessity for a meaningful contemporary worship experience. This means lay involvement in the whole process, inspiration, creation, and celebration of worship.

It would be a mistake to limit this process by the boundaries of the current liturgical renewal movement. Liturgical Renewal has been a phenomenon that has gained recent notoriety, yet has had a very long history.<sup>1</sup> Even Vatican II has made statements as to encourage "That the faithful take part knowingly, actively and fruitfully."<sup>2</sup> These statements encourage active participation in the singing (as opposed to choirs doing it all),<sup>3</sup> and even states that qualified lay persons may administer some sacraments.<sup>4</sup> But it can be

easily seen that while almost all liturgical movements are and have been staunch supporters of lay leadership, the major efforts in worship are still put forth by the clergy.<sup>5</sup> The Pastor, with the possible assistance of the choir director, initiates and creates the vast majority of the "worship" experiences in our country. The congregation, rather than being an integral part of the worship process, becomes the object of it.

Another rallying point of the liturgical renewal movement consists of the cry for meaningful, "authentic" worship. "Traditional" worship is based on the same point of "authenticity." Both seek to transmit the act of worship through relevant structures. It would be a moot point to debate the difference between "traditional" and "renewed" worship. The direction of this project leads us in a different and often overlooked direction. It is a direction that lifts up examples of liturgical change in response to cultural change. It is a direction that points us in a traditional, yet new and creative direction for authentic, meaningful worship.

The direction we are going rests on two basic Christian understandings of the world. First: Christians, in considering themselves created in the image of God, find themselves charged with an active and responsible role in the ongoing nature of creation.<sup>6</sup> This basic Old Testament message is amplified in the New Testament where God's creative word was embodied in Jesus of Nazareth. From the beginning, the Christian Church as the Body of Christ becomes the present manifestation of God's creative Word.<sup>7</sup> To become a Christian person is to be called into the active process of worship as well as into membership with one another in Christ's Body. It is to be put into



active participation with the continual process of creation.<sup>8</sup>

Secondly, the concept of the "Priesthood of all Believers" is vital. Oversimplified, it states that ministry is given to all people by God. The entire corporate body receives God's grace and call. The clergy are given a leading role in this community due to their historical leadership, their special calling and training, and by the support and affirmation of the community.<sup>9</sup> This clergy then works with other Christians who are called into other roles, helping them to create their Christian life style as well as the Christian worship experience.

The Early Church, the Reformed Church of the Middle ages and the Colonial Church of American Methodism, were all based on these principles. These three examples touch the vital base of cultural vitality and reflect congregational involvement in the total worship process. We shall look at these examples later in our study of the process of lay involvement in worship. To proceed we need a basic definition of the Christian worship act as seen in the light of these two aforementioned principles.

Christian Worship is the symbolic representation of the loving act of God (Salvation), through Jesus Christ (Incarnation), and our response to it (Repentance). Worship reflects not only the personal relationship of God (Imminence) but the "wholly otherness" of God (Transcendence). Worship becomes a time and place to re-experience God in our life, to give thanks, praise, confession and responsible action in the light of God's Word. Alive worship comes from the people's participation in and reliving of God's act that

signified a release from bonds of darkness into the freedom of light. The separation from God as humans have known it (sin and judgment) is filled with a new personal relationship with God that is integrated with the community's experience by worship. Worship then informs and inspires creative living as a response. Worship at its best is an enthusiastic experience recreating anew all the power of God's original saving act through Jesus Christ in the individual as part of the worshipping community. When we use "enthusiasm" in the early Greek sense of "to fill with God's Holy Spirit," we begin to catch some of the liberating possibilities of worship. Worship at its worst can become an all consuming frenzy of emotion or a lifeless, empty shell of formality. Neither of these extremes proclaims the Gospel of meaningful change through God's love for persons. It is the best that we strive for, not the worst.

In summary, this project is a working manual for factual knowledge of, reflection upon, and actualization of contemporary worship through lay participation. It is a manual to put into practice the participation of Christian people in worship initiation, planning and creation. In so doing, it offers a method to close the gap between worship form and cultured reality.

Chapter one deals with the statement of "who we are . . . ." It's a statement of confession, of becoming aware that God is present in the world whether we recognize it or not. We need to look hard at ourselves to see how we've betrayed God's love by either clinging to lifeless authoritarian forms or by being indifferent secular autonomous people. This chapter and its described view point are especially

focused on the contemporary American scene. Thus we gain a view of where we start as a worshipping people under God.

Chapter two deals with "where we've been . . . ." This is basically another step in confession, only this time we look at the past in the hope of discovering some examples of successful liturgical reform. Here we lift up the experience of the Early Christians, the Reformers, and the Colonial Methodist Church as somehow actualizing authentic worship in their culture.

Chapter three titled "Where we need to be . . ." takes the earlier theological remarks of personal responsibility and priesthood of all believers, and deals with them more thoroughly. It is the Word of God we are looking for here, and we turn to John Cobb and Suzanne Langer/Jack Coogan to help us. The goal is a model of Christian Worship to help guide our renewal efforts.

Chapter four deals with the structure of Christian Worship. The role of the minister is central to the renewal of a wholistic worship form. Guidelines and cautions also arise as we seek ways to use this structure.

Finally, in chapter five, we get to the particular interest of this paper, the application of lay involvement to worship creation. A detailed plan for working with a congregation will be laid out, providing steps and insights needed to make this lay participation process a reality in the local church. In the last item, the Postlude, there will be some thoughts and insights about this process as applied to Methodist worship.

It is very important to note that a defense of Liturgical renewal is not being attempted here. Questions such as "is change

good?", "Why change?", or "What is the difference between 'varying' and 'changing' the liturgy?" are not at issue. Liturgical renewal is assumed as a positive, constructive movement. What is at issue is the current cultural expression of the Gospel in worship by the people and how best that can be actualized. What is struggled with here is a process to actualize such worship. For this reason a sensitive, directive Pastor is important. This process begins where the people are and, like pastoral counseling, must be guided and facilitated to the final result. It is hoped that what is developed here is a practical, tested method of encouraging authentic, meaningful worship.

In any project of this nature it is recognized that there are biases and assumptions in effect by the writer and in this paper we have no exception to this rule. An obvious bias stated earlier is my reliance on the current mainline Protestant worship tradition as the point of study. While there may be similar problems and/or positive directions to be found in ethnic and other types of worship, I have not researched them. Additionally I am not trying to find a theological norm of Christian Worship or study the doctrine of the Church. It is also obvious by the limited historical section that no exhaustive analysis is attempted. The issue here is recognizing what the current rapid cultural changes mean to worship forms and how we can cope with such changes.

I have assumed that liturgical change and challenge is positive, believing that the Gospel of Jesus Christ<sup>10</sup> is continually relevant to cultures in different eras. It does this while taking on

many forms of expression while keeping its content uniform and basically unchanged. I may be taking the risk of being too "change"-orientated. I would rather err in the direction of change, considering the present state of liturgical affairs, than be too rigid and conservative in form. Being change-orientated would at least allow the input of current cultural patterns and therefore consistent with the trend of this project.

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<sup>10</sup>It is also important to state that no comprehensive examination of what the "Gospel of Jesus Christ" is with respect to worship. The content of that Gospel is assumed throughout this whole work.



## Chapter 1

WHO WE ARE: SOME THOUGHTS ON  
HUMANITY AND WORSHIP

Humanity is composed of living beings in contact with each other. Humanity as a whole faces death through the deaths of its component members. Every human society is, in the last resort, people banded together in the face of death. The power of religion in that society then depends upon the credibility of the rituals and life styles religion puts into the hands of its people as they walk inevitably toward death.<sup>1</sup>

Human society is orientated for survival, survival of itself and so of its individuals. Every human order is a community in the face of death.<sup>2</sup> In this quest for survival, habits are formed that promote life. These habits become rites and humanity cannot live without rites.<sup>3</sup> These rites grow out of the meaningful habits that society has created.

For the religious, worship becomes a rite in life as a survival technique against death.<sup>4</sup> Religion in this sense becomes the attempt to conceive of the entire universe as being humanly significant.<sup>5</sup> A person cannot live without some sort of meaningful worship, even though secular persons today may not be inspired by the traditional forms of worship used today.<sup>6</sup>

Based on these assumptions, a short consideration of the theology of worship can take place. I wish to give special thanks

to Raimundo Panikkar<sup>7</sup> for the interpretation of Paul Tillich's cosmologies. The three salient points of that scheme are: Sacred Heteronomy, Profane Autonomy, and Theandic Ontonomy.<sup>8</sup>

We understand Sacred Heteronomy as a world view that relies on a hierarchial structure of reality. References to a Three-level cosmos would do as an example of this reality. God is not only superior to humanity but is creator and thus Lord. Humanity does not only obey God but also the hierarchial order. Theology is the master of mere Philosophy and determines the limits of scientific investigation. In this view worship is the highest action undertaken by any person. It has a sphere of its own, it is sacred. Worship is separated from that which is not sacred, the profane. The "vertical" dimension of human religion is completely dominate. Secularization, as a horizontal distraction is seen as a destroyer of the sacred and therefore an enemy.<sup>9</sup> This is the view of God the authoritarian.

Profane Autonomy is a reaction against such a hierarchial statement. It sees the world and the human being to be self-determined as well as determinable. Each is a law unto itself. Any outside directive is seen as an imposition on the individual units. Here is individualism in its purest form. Each level or sphere has its own zone of influence and no interference between spheres is tolerated. In the extreme it is anarchy. All courses of inquiry are equally valid, all areas claim independence. God is not seen as an absolute tyrant, but is bound by the natural laws of creation which consist of truth and beauty, cause and effect. God is in a certain place and is respected in it. It is the will that discovers God, there is little room for mysticism and transcendence. Knowledge and



self-criticism are values to be sought after. Secularization is an agent promoting that knowledge and self-criticism to be valued. The "horizontal" relationship of person to person is primary here.<sup>10</sup> This is the view of the person as total individualist.

Theandric Ontonomy is composed of awareness that has transcended individualism and regards the universe as a whole. Regulation of a specific being is neither self-imposed nor dictated but instead is found in discovering its own destiny-its ultimate potential. This recognition of the inner regularities of each field of activity or sphere of being in the light of the whole is the key concept of ontonomy. The universe is a connected whole. The development and progress of one being is not to be without expense to another. There is a synthesis and harmony of God composed of devotion (or love), of temiternity (a present filled with the potency of the past and the hope of the future), and participation of all with each other. God is the unity and Jesus Christ is the real person and real God in paradigm. God is neither an authoritarian or a secular box but is there, interacting and connected with all. Secularization and worship are parts of this whole, each distinct yet each participating with each other. "Horizontal" and "vertical" relationships are both intertwined with each other at all points.<sup>11</sup>

It will be through these three cosmologies that our present understanding of worship will be formed. It is hoped that from this understanding a plausible model for worship creation can be drawn.

# I. SACRED HETERONOMY: A TRADITIONAL ATTITUDE TOWARDS WORSHIP

Consider these two definitions of worship: "What matters above all in (worship) is the internal movement of souls and the divine grace operating in them"<sup>12</sup> and "(Worship) involves a break from our normal consciousness. It means a stepping aside from normal life in order to perceive it in a deeper and more significant way . . . We do not take seriously enough the necessity of a temporary withdrawal from the world in (worship) in order to understand the true nature of life."<sup>13</sup>

We have here definitions of classical worship. They are highly theological, highly reflective on the nature of worship. They also illustrate definitions formed with a rigid authoritarian God in mind.

The problems of using such definitions are obvious. Words, meanings, and phrases could be shuffled around to reach the desired "clarity," but there would be no guarantee of understanding without massive footnotes or long explanations. Webster defines "Christian Worship" as including prayer, meditation, church services, or any other rite showing reverence or devotion, religious homage or veneration to the God of the Judeo-Christian heritage.<sup>14</sup> We learn from other readings that "liturgy" is the term which covers generally all that public worship which is organized by the church, and which is open to and offered by, or in the name of, all who are members of the church.<sup>15</sup> Also, "contemplation" is distinguished as the private

personal prayers and meditations of individual Christians who make up the church, as they struggle to become still enough to reflect the face of God.<sup>16</sup> We can see immediately that within these three supposedly separate definitions there is a vast overlap of meanings and actions. For all the work that has gone into worship one could at least expect that an agreement on the fundamentals should be clear, but unfortunately they are not.

All of these efforts come out of the search for the "true" or authentic experience of worship that would be universal to all people in all times. It is a search for the "classic shape" of the liturgy that would once and for all allow humanity to be in touch with God through a repeatable corporate act. Christian history is full of such searches, a history of careful trial and error experimentation. Throughout this time congregations have placed their trust in well-established forms and orders, allowing innovation when and where it fit rigorous criteria of "perfecting" the liturgy.<sup>17</sup> Even recently, the discoveries of the late 19th and early 20th centuries had given us a picture of times "when liturgies were pure." Those were the days when people knew what to do; when the rubical directives were precise; everything had its time and place; manners were proper; moods were restrained with fineness.<sup>18</sup> This was especially evident in the English tradition and the various forms of worship derived from it.

This attitude toward worship was caused by the placing of confidence in what some specialist said was right and proper, even without learning enough of the meanings to justify that trust. "People trusted that authority because it belonged to the church. There

seemed to be nothing wrong with putting all this trust in one particular person who knew what it was all about." Dr. Horn states:

The oracle spoke and every church could know where to put its flowers, or where the officiating minister should stand, when he should turn and where. If this was not authoritative for all, the movement toward organizational regularity soon took over a power of its own. Congregations could seek regularity and standardization because they belonged to a national church. In a world of increasing mobility it made sense to provide a single, familiar liturgy in every church.<sup>19</sup>

Within this "Holy Authority" structure worship is said to have three main operative values: adoration, eternity and sacrifice.

1) Adoration is a way which causes the complete surrender of the human to the Divine Power.

2) Eternity is the complete reality having its own "consistency," and is independent of time.

3) Sacrifice, the domain of right action, sacred action, the action which calls for and accepts salvation. Panikkar stated it this way:

Worship with these three values appears to be the act by which (one) must adore God and throw (oneself) into the domain of God's sovereign love, living a life which corresponds to the saving sacrifice which (one) performs according to the different traditional patterns. Any act of (this) worship will express in one way or another these three fundamental values (of sacred heteronomy) and be geared to their cultivation.

All of this has resulted in the non-changing forms of worship of the 20th century. They are word orientated, handed down from one generation to the next with little or no change. The meanings become habitual, the habits become repeated for their own sake. Without a vital historical education, the participants have apparently lost the meanings and only "perform" empty symbolic actions. As a response to

this state of some worshiping bodies comes the recent movement known as "liturgical renewal," a movement that shakes up many worshipers with its rapid change from tradition and its wild experimentation.<sup>20</sup>

## II. SECULARIZATION: THE PROFANE AUTONOMY

The current trend in liturgical renewal has its initiating occasion in the modern secularization process. In this movement, accepted standards of worship have been shaken and an undisciplined expression of faith has broken out.<sup>21</sup> Some commentators have noted that feeling is in the ascendancy as a protest against our scientific/technologic society.<sup>22</sup> There is pressure on the designers of worship in movement to allow full expression of human feelings in worship.<sup>23</sup>

This movement has caught the mainline churches off guard. "Popularity" rather than "tradition" becomes the guide word of the day.<sup>24</sup> This is a far cry from the disciplined, thought-out types of worship that dominated the previous period. The age of renewal is an age of freedom and experimentation but it was not without its own kind of disillusionment. Gregory Baum wrote in Man Becoming this description of those who became dissatisfied in the church either by too-swift and often meaningless changes in liturgy or by the snails-pace traditionalism of the church in response to a stimulating secular culture:

A Christian meets his crisis when the spiritual experience of his culture is no longer reconcilable with the religious outlook he has inherited and God seems to be more powerfully present in the former than in the latter. Such a crisis often results in what is called superficially, a loss of faith. The Christian then gives up his religion.<sup>25</sup>

Note this quotation carefully. It points out the state of our religious affairs and gives us the starting point for our study. The Christian, finding a more valid God-experience in the culture, chooses against "organized religion." The institution, the rites, the rituals, no longer reflect the meaning within the culture. Disillusionment with the traditional religious authorities and teachings have become common.

As a result of this disillusionment, liturgical renewal has become ever more directed toward the secular society. There have been calls for the church to move into the human world and there provide new resources for human life. In other words the church's primary focus becomes secular.<sup>26</sup> It was a complete switch to human autonomy from God-Authority, sacred heteronomy. The focus is on humans almost to the exclusion of God. Values become respect (or reverence), service (or work) and the here and now with a resultant loss of sense of eternity.

But the goals for a rebirth of religion and worship were not to be realized. Out of this shift of the focus of worship to human problems the church became secularized and lost its authority.<sup>27</sup> Once again the religious legitimations of the world had lost their plausibility not only for a few intellectuals and other marginal individuals, but for the broad masses of entire societies.<sup>28</sup> "Meaninglessness" has grown to such proportions in this secularized society that it presents a problem for not only such institutions as the state or the economy but for the ordinary routines of everyday life,<sup>29</sup> and therefore the habit of worship and the institutions of religion. Religion and worship no longer direct attention to the cosmos or

history (now secularized) but to individual existency (or psychology).<sup>30</sup>

This "individualization" has become one of the essential traits of secularized religion. This means that a privatized religion has become a matter of personal choice and such a private religion, however "real" cannot fulfill any longer the classic role of religion. It has no common liturgical world view where society receives ultimate meaning.<sup>31</sup> Religion no longer provides the valuable check and balance of God's viewpoint of a culture, but has instead been co-opted by it. The world building potency of religion is now restricted to the building of sub-worlds within individuals.<sup>32</sup>

In this situation, religious institutions are reduced to a buyer-seller status, trying to win "consumers" by efficiently packaging its "products" while all the time trying to appeal to greater and greater numbers of people to prove its "success." In this situation religious organizations are faced with a choice. Either they play the game of religious free enterprise by shaping their liturgy and dogma to please consumers or they retrench in their traditional socio-religious structures and ignore the secularizing trends around them.<sup>33</sup> Too many of our churches and church leaders see the problem in only this "either/or" situation. In their myopia they fail to see a third and hopefully promising way to handle this crisis on meaningless institutions.

When we read further in the earlier quote from Gregory Baum, we find these illuminating lines:

. . . The Christian then gives up his religion. But if there are available to him theological methods by which he may reinterpret and reassimilate the inherited religion, he

may discover a new unity of religious experience, where the Gospel celebrated in the Church sheds light on and intensifies the Spirit-created redemptive values present in the culture to which he belongs. He may then, as a Christian, transform this culture along the line of its own deepest dimension.<sup>34</sup>

Here then is an opening that leads us to the possibilities of Theandric Ontonomy: A renewed direction for liturgy.

### III. THEANDRIC ONTONOMY: A RENEWED DIRECTION FOR WORSHIP

The tension that secular society produces with respect to religion is not new, but today it seems to be stronger. It has more far-reaching effects than ever before. Yet, if a new order is to be found it must be discovered in taking that tension seriously and discovering a new base upon which a valid religious life can be built.<sup>35</sup>

As was stated in the introduction, a theandric ontonomy indicates a field theory of the cosmos. wholistic understanding of our ecological nature, with a prime focus on our relationship with God. Rather than a person being compartmentalized and individualized in a secular culture, a person can become "wholized" (made complete, fulfilled). (This, of course, is a task the church has been working at for centuries.)<sup>36</sup> Only worship can prevent secularization from being inhuman and only secularization can save worship from being meaningless by virtue of their relationship.<sup>37</sup> It is in their balance and tension that we find the renewing direction for worship.

Before we go into the direction of "wholized" worship for a "wholized" person, we need to be true to our heritage and see this secularization process in historical perspective. The



compartmentalized/individualized person is not new in history, but actually was present in the earliest of the "pagan" religions. Even the pagan Gods were compartmentalized into all the different aspects of a "strange and mystical" natural world. The Hebrew's met this situation of multiple loyalties with a radical religious event. They pledged allegiance to one God, Yahweh.<sup>38</sup> But even they could not stay on that belief for long and after a time of struggling under the legalism of Judaism and their compartmentalized, self-imposed law code, another radical religious event occurred and Christianity began. The radical notion of wholeness-in-being had to be reaffirmed to a lost people. It can then be seen that the aspects of secularity began in the Old Testament<sup>39</sup> and closer inspection will reveal that it runs through Christian history as well.

In this effort that turns our study to selected samples of Christian history where traditional worship met a changing social situation. In each of the following struggles, people experienced a renewed vitality in worship.

## Chapter 2

## WHERE WE'VE BEEN

## I. PAUL AND THE EARLY CHRISTIAN CHURCH

One of the concerns of Paul of Tarsus as he traveled the Eastern Mediterranean was worship. It is easy to see that the church gathered (*ἐκκλησία*) is in fact the church in worship. In other words the church becomes what it claims to be in worship!<sup>1</sup> Paul's contacts with the "church gathered" were intimately connected with the church at worship. The working definition for this project is to consider worship as symbolic act; the basic action in which people participate that represents the saving act of God in Jesus Christ, as well as their response. Worship is a combination of the action of God towards the congregation with the action of the congregation's response before God.<sup>2</sup>

Background:

For the early Christian Church, worship was a definite response to God's initiating event of salvation in Jesus Christ. This saving event touched people in a very personal manner. The response became structured within the traditional Hebrew worship grouping but has important differences from them. These differences included the Kerygma (Gospel preaching) of the church, interpretation from a new

point in time and the personal sharings of individuals about their contacts with God through Jesus Christ. We find a specific reference to this in I Cor. 14:26, "What then brethren? When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation . . ." (RSV).

As a result of this corporate expression of personal revelation, early Christian worship was greatly varied. It was only natural that when the "Good News of Jesus Christ spread and as people in different parts of the Roman Empire heard and responded to God's Word, various local styles of response would be created. This was true of the very earliest period in the Christian movement.<sup>3</sup> Freedom and variety was the mark of this early Christian worship, and it was into this freedom that Paul stepped to help bring form out of what was a very hererogenous situation. Present was the basic belief in the one church, yet there was the reality of the immense variety in the manifestations and concepts of that church.<sup>4</sup>

Paul found that the theology of worship in this early Christian movement came from old, yet now changing traditions, Moule, in Worship in the New Testament (Knox, 1961, VA.), states "Christian Worship, like Christian literature, was continuous with, and yet in marked contrast to, Jewish worship."<sup>5</sup> The new elements added to the old Hebrew heritage consisted of these essential parts:

- 1) The addition of the personal ministry and message of Jesus.

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<sup>3</sup>Gradually, unifying forces of later centuries became dominant and the Church opted for one liturgical form. See Hahn, The Worship of the Early Christians, p. 52.

- 2) The reality and revelation of the death, resurrection of the Christ, and,
- 3) The continuing operation of the Holy Spirit.<sup>6</sup>

The risen Lord, Jesus Christ, embodied all these concepts and became the central focus of all early Christian worship. These parts were actualized in worship by stressing both the spiritual nature of the faith and the responsibility of the congregation for doing their part.<sup>7</sup> We get a glimpse of this in John 4:24, "God is Spirit and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth." (RSV). Tradition and creativity stood side by side and in a wholistic manner brought vitality to Christian worship.

In this worship, the early Christians became concerned with developing the "life of God" in the souls of people.<sup>8</sup> As well as expressing their faith in written creeds and set prayers, the membership in the church emphasized an individual's faith response as well as formal training. Worship was planned to let the Holy Spirit move in a structure that was designed to encourage the presence of God through Christ.<sup>9</sup>

We see here the action of God's Word interacting with the culture in a renewed and invigorated way. Cullmann remarks, "at that time, considerable freedom prevailed, . . . indeed, (there were) fixed liturgical forms and usages but that as yet they probably stood in no fixed sequence."<sup>10</sup> In the perception of the early Christians the "law" of the Jewish practices had been "broken" by the Christ event, and so the worship event, along with the rest of the rabbinic life, was liberalized to encompass the freedom of God's Holy Spirit. Worship need no longer take place within well defined and sanctified

boundaries. Support for this new freedom in worship came from the influence of some Hellenistic-Jews who were already separated physically from the temple. Additionally, Hellenistic Christian converts were never under the "demands of the law," and therefore the Rabbinic laws had little effect on them. There was also an increasing pressure that was put on the new Christian communities from the surrounding Hellenistic culture. First, this culture had a feeling of responsibility in their sacred acts that was focused on fellow humans rather than leaving the actualization of humans up to God.<sup>11</sup> Secondly, out of their previous "mystical religious" training the Hellenistic Christian converts were quick to identify new "gifts of the spirit." "Freedom from the law" had opened wide the doors to the personal interpretation of God's revelations and created certain problems. Completely free and unrestructured spiritual utterances came to have a place among the fixed liturgical forms of Psalms, scripture, and letter readings.<sup>12</sup> These were interpreted as God's special gifts to the "chosen" people and these gifts enhanced the spiritual coexistence with God through Christ. It came to the point where any external means, any religious symbols or liturgical type frame-works, were now acceptable as long as they could be a means to a deeper relationship with God.<sup>13</sup> The ends were seen as justifying unrestricted autonomy.

### Paul and Worship

Paul came preaching "Jesus Christ and him crucified." (I Colossians 2:2, RSV.) Here was the focus of Christian worship. Paul

championed neither the very charismatic "free" form of worship, nor the tightly structured "ritual" form of worship, but a balanced form based on "edification." The standard of moderation became Paul's greatest contribution to the chaos of liturgical forms that prevailed in the early Christian church.<sup>14</sup>

Gunther Bornkamm<sup>15</sup> tells us that Paul held to the main theological idea of the church as Christ's body. The Church is "a body inaugurated by God and organized by his spirit."<sup>16</sup> It is made tangible in the context of salvation and takes the form of God's people trying to be better in God's sight.<sup>17</sup> The Church is physically Christ's body here on earth, empowered by the Holy Spirit and without the divisive boundaries found in the world.<sup>18</sup>

The empowering of Christ's body (the gathered community) by the Holy Spirit led to a great effort to witness to the culture around them. Worship became a central part of that effort. Gunther Bornkamm points this out by saying that "Paul holds fast to the missionary function of the Word even in the case of worship."<sup>19</sup> Wilhem Hahn supports this idea and adds, "for Paul (the) emphasis on lucid speech and demand that 'prophecy' (knowledge and wisdom), be given precedence is associated with the missionary function of worship."<sup>20</sup> Paul's own words argue from this viewpoint in I Cor. 14:23, "If, therefore, the whole church assembles and all speak in tongues, and outsiders or unbelievers enter, will they not say that you are mad?" (RSV).<sup>21</sup> Paul saw the services of the Christian

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<sup>21</sup>Cullmann, p. 29, goes to great lengths to show that missionary preaching had nothing to do with the regular worship of the Christian community, that is, the Lord's Supper. The "so-called service of

community equipping the faithful for service in the world. Worship was designed in relation to the particular age and social situation that was present and was aimed at spreading the Good News. It was this motivation that brought order out of the chaos of early Christian worship by developing the idea of "edification," the building up of the body of Christ through worship.<sup>22</sup>

The fourteenth chapter of Paul's Epistle to the Corinthians gives us a concise statement of "edification" in worship. The specific Corinthian problem was the unrestricted practice of "christian" freedom.<sup>23</sup> This can be seen in the variety of topics covered in this epistle and the moderating tone Paul used to correct these excesses.<sup>24</sup> It is evident in chapter 14 that Paul considered the dominance of estatic manifestations in worship questionable.<sup>25</sup> Paul's response to such manifestations was to judge them according to their ability to "edify" or "build up" the Christian community.<sup>26</sup> Paul defined edification not in the sense of individual subjective religious experience but of edifying the church (I Cor. 14:3-5, 12, 17, 26.).<sup>27</sup> The fanatical Corinthians had taken their licentiousness to the limits and felt they had total freedom to do anything in the name of "self." Paul speaks of self-edification only with irony and is very critical of it (I Cor. 4:4, 8:10.).<sup>28</sup>

In their worship, the Corinthians had been on their own for a

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<sup>21</sup> the word existed for conversion but not edification." I think Paul's own words lead us in a different direction. Cf. I Cor. 14:26. It is obvious that edification is necessary to all worship events. See Hahn, The Worship of the Early Christians, p. 28.

<sup>24</sup> The argument for "eating all together" (I Cor. 11:20) was based on one body concept and was for the resulting "edification."

while and there was no official supervision of details or traditional adherence to a fixed liturgical order.<sup>29</sup> Such order was thought to suppress any free expression of the spirit. Paul nevertheless states that everything should be done in order (*κατὰ τάξιν*, I Cor. 14:40.). "Edification" is therefore understood by Paul to be an act that has the goal of knowledge as well as concerning itself with the spiritual growth of the Christian community.<sup>30</sup>

### Lessons From Paul

All of Paul's thoughts of edification lead us to the "wholistic" definition for worship. We can be sure that for each occasion he spoke of worship in his letters, there must have been many times that he spoke of worship orally to the congregations as he traveled and preached.

1) Paul's guidelines for this "wholistic" worship came directly from Jesus. It was the approach of Jesus to combine freedom and constraint in an apparently contradictory way which at first glance seem impossible to harmonize.<sup>31</sup> Paul judged worship acts by the contradictory standard of Christ that was focused in a most enigmatic form, that of life through death on the cross.<sup>32</sup> It was this freedom/constraint frame-work that Paul laid on the Hellenistic/mystical idea of "experiential union with life force" (with all of its ecstatic ideas and expressions).<sup>33</sup> Autonomous worship was given a sacred dimension without going back to the older hierarchy of God's authoritarianism.

Paul focused this "balanced" worship squarely on the present,



the here and now. He reminded the early Church not to be in the fanciful beyond or in the unalterable past, but to be in the present "history." Yet, they were called to be between the cross and the second age, in a highly realistic earthly togetherness.<sup>34</sup> This balance of Paul's reflects, as Bornkamm puts it, "the tense last days between the resurrection of the crucified Jesus and His Second coming. Still under the auspices of his death on the cross in weakness, yet already in a life deriving from the power of the risen one."<sup>35</sup> It is within this harmonious combination of unstructured freedom and circumscribing restrictions that lies the greatness and power of the Gospel and of the early Christian worship forms.<sup>36</sup>

2) As we look closer at these forms we see the here and now becoming focused in the specific actions of worship. The purpose of edifying, of building up the body of Christ, becomes served by the liturgical actions of breaking and sharing the bread and cup; of readings, proclamations, confession and prayer; of doxologies, blessings, and hymns in liturgical as well as free forms; and of prophecies and the speaking and interpretation of tongues.<sup>37</sup> These elements can be seen to fit and flow into each other sometimes spontaneously and sometimes because of tradition. For example, it's reasonable for a doxology (Praise to God) to follow after reading of scriptures (God's gift of the Word) and prayers of thanks after the sacraments (God's gift of Christ).

All of these forms were judged by Paul's requirement that they be missionary in character. The spirits let loose in worship had to pass the test of communication to the unchurched as well as the church.<sup>38</sup> From these guidelines it leads us to a picture of

the early Christian worship as having a vitality and creative spontaneity that breathes new life into old forms. This was accomplished in part by having aspects of worship coming from the congregation as the spirit moved them.<sup>39</sup> This sharing was guided of course by the standard of "edification" for all the participants.

The individual's response to this edifying structure is a key to the whole process. We can see from I Cor. 8:11 ff., Romans 14:15, 15:17, that "self surrender and service in renunciation of one's own rights is now the law of church 'edification'."<sup>40</sup> It is the attitude of the worshiper that makes everything come together. God is transcendent by providing the Word and the views of reality, and God is imminent in the calling each worshiper to act responsibly. Each and every church member has the duty of edifying the rest.<sup>41</sup> In this way, edification though seen as the task of the community, rests on each individual. It is the individual's response to God's confronting Gospel that allows the worship to become spiritual and vital.<sup>42</sup> It is then that the community as a group of believing individuals worship with recognition of their responsibility "wholistic."

By the individual's participation in this process the entire community is edified and spiritual growth becomes a reality (I Thess. 5:11.).<sup>43</sup> These are the parts of the body of God participating in worship. This is the body of God in worship. They are committed to Christ in a struggle to grow and be open to the Holy Spirit. They are welded into one unit, one family. They try to communicate this "new life" to nonchristians as a "here and now" kingdom of God and not a far off goal. Their wholistic view of the world is celebrated

as they continue their process of edification.

### Conclusion

In summary, Paul's standards of worship are eloquent and clear. Put simply they are "do all things in edification." That word is mentioned seven times in I Corinthians 14, and edification (οἰκοδομεῖν), referring to the graduation and use of the gifts in regulation of worship, becomes the overriding thought for Pauline worship.<sup>44</sup> The sense of building up a community that is definitely "going" somewhere is obviously central. Growth in sharing and learning leads the early Christian believer to the "righteous" way of life, and not just to a cultic practice.<sup>45</sup> Worship becomes a way of ordering priorities, evaluating life-styles, presenting new models for action; and so affects the everyday common life of practicing Christians. It's the Spirit of God, given permanently to the congregation, the body of Christ, that animates all of this

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<sup>45</sup>The early Christians at first gathered in the temple with the other Jews of their day. They soon outgrew these quarters as their "house" meetings were very common (Acts 12:12, Romans 16:5 etc.), especially following the style of the Upper Room Last Supper (Cullman, p. 9.). There was special importance that they gathered in the same place together (ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ, I Cor. 11:20, Eph. 5:2) (Cullman, p. 9.). They met daily (Acts 2:46, 5:42, Luke 24:53) and even though the Jewish Christians observed the Sabbath, they also started the Lord's Day as a celebration of the first day of Christ's resurrection, a "little" Easter each week (Cullman, pp. 10 ff.). There were basically two emphasis in worship, Paul's "edification" service (I Cor. 14:26) and the Eucharist (Moule, p. 62.). (Which also was modeled on edification but had the eucharist as central.) Actual worship sections included instruction, preaching, and breaking of bread (Acts 2:42, 46, 20:7) as well as prayers. This teaching (or sermon), prayers and communion could be followed by Psalms, Revelation, or other gifts (I Cor. 14:26, 29, 32.).

activity and provides the power for mission into the world. It's a "wholistic" worship that integrates the sacred and the secular.

The result of these early principles have given us the liturgical forms upon which all our Christian worship has grown. Samples of early worship are found in such sources as Acts 2:42, 46; 5:42, Revelation of John 1:10, the Didache, Justin (Apology) and the letter Pliny to Trajan. From these sources and with Paul's application of "edification" we can begin to see the hazy outlines of early Christian worship.<sup>46</sup> It is to Paul's ability of putting form and freedom together that we owe our legacy of Christian worship. As we briefly look at the Reformation and Colonial America, we find the same pattern of vital, creative sharing of Christian experience putting the sacred and secular together in a wholistic way.

## II. LUTHER'S UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORSHIP DYNAMIC

Reformation thought has provided many areas of the church with new vitality and renewed meanings. This process is evident in the changes worship went through under the direction of Martin Luther. Luther's Formula Missae and Deutsche Messe are exciting examples of creative worship. No other set of worship guidelines had the impact on Protestant Christianity as did Luther's. It has a strong basis of Roman Catholic tradition while at the same time dealing with progressive reformist theology. Choosing this example for our purposes is not without its problems. "Sacred" language, feudal symbolism, and reformation infatuation with the spoken/printed

word can cause confusion as we try to speak to our present day "advanced" society. With these difficulties in mind, we can look carefully and see how once again a ritual "caught up" to the change in society, how the secular and sacred were once again complementary.

In Luther's reformed worship, three things stand out as changes in the Catholic Mass as he found it: 1) the introduction of German hymns, 2) the recovery of the sermon, and 3) the restoration of the communion of the people.<sup>47</sup>

The singing of hymns by the congregation points out Luther's sensitivity to the need of lay participation.<sup>48</sup> Hymns become powerful "lyric gospels" and as they were composed in the native tongue of the congregation, they were understood by all. Barroom melodies were used as vehicles of conveyance of these hymns, many of which Luther wrote himself.<sup>49</sup> It is attributed to Luther the words, "Next to Theology, I give my first and highest honor to music."<sup>50</sup> All of these efforts were pointed at the return of the Worship of God to the people, rather than the priests. Reformation music formed a very important link in making the church traditions and the message of Christ come alive once again.

The recovery of the sermon is one of Luther's most unique and influential reforms. Luther, as a "renaissance man," put more emphasis on the ear than on the eye as a receiver of God's Word.<sup>51</sup> For Luther, preaching the word and hearing the word were synonymous.<sup>52</sup> Therefore, out of the need to actively preach/hear the word in the local congregation, the sermon as the teaching instrument was reborn. The pulpit became the "battlefield for Christ" as Vajta puts it in his book, Luther on Worship.<sup>53</sup> We see here Luther's desire for

congregational edification that parallels Paul's same desire.

Thirdly, we have Luther's restoration of the Eucharistic act to the people. Prior to Luther's reformation of the liturgy, it was common practice in the Catholic church to have certain "chosen" Christians (priests) perform the rite of sacrifice in communion.<sup>54</sup> This sacrifice stood for two major doctrines, first that Jesus Christ was being offered by the priest as a sacrifice along with other earthly objects, and that God's word was being "preached" by this act in an outward and visible way. The understanding of worship taught by this mass was one which included continual sacrifice. One must sacrifice one's earthly goods, which includes a repetition of the sacrifice of Christ, to gain heaven and eternal salvation.<sup>55</sup> A person was pictured as an entity able to deal with and if necessary appease a wrathful God who required sacrifice.<sup>56</sup> In other words, one was seen to have assumed the power to create a state of grace upon oneself. This 16th century Roman Catholic view Luther totally rejected and consequently threw out the entire canon of the Mass which deals with this particular theology of sacrifice.

A short digression is in order here to explain Luther's theology in relation to the worship act. According to Luther, one is very much dependent on God's unlimited and unimaginable power, which was revealed through Christ.<sup>57</sup> Luther did not try to define God directly, but only described the all-important relationship with God, which is the only thing a person can know in their present life. That relationship is characterized by faith.<sup>58</sup> "To have a god (faith) is to trust and believe him from the whole heart . . . . If your faith and trust be right then your god is also true."<sup>59</sup>

However this faith is not static for it points beyond a passive seeking of God through grace. One's response to the eternal love and goodness of God is sacrificial, but only in a spiritual manner.<sup>60</sup> Each participant has to come to terms with their belief in God through the symbolic act of spiritual sacrifice: Holy Communion.<sup>61</sup> This cannot be done for a person by others because only God and the participant knows the "old Adam" within that must be sacrificed in order for the "new Man" to be born. Christ's one and perfect sacrifice can only be remembered and re-lived, it cannot be duplicated.<sup>62</sup> This remembrance is part of God's redemptive work rather than the work of humanity.<sup>63</sup> The Eucharist is God's institution and not a human one.

Additionally, each person has to come to terms with that great arresting and motivating force, God's Word.<sup>64</sup> Based on faith, and the power of the Word, Christ's presence becomes real in each and every person as the "new person" is born. God is for us, each and every one.<sup>65</sup>

After this brief overview of the highlights of Luther's worship theology, we can now explore the effect of the changes Luther made in the mass. Worship is seen as the place that can inspire one to seek that unique relationship with God through faith in Jesus Christ. A person comes to worship unable to "make" a personal salvation and therefore looks to God. Worship becomes the place where the work of God (grace) and the response of humans (faith) meet.<sup>66</sup> Worship becomes central to the believer's life as it is the focus of the message and the remembrance of Jesus Christ. The same Jesus Christ that has made a personal relationship to God possible.

Worship has required its role as an integrating force in the believer's life bringing the sacred word of God into the secular life of humanity. As a result, the worshiper comes away from this experience with all the power and knowledge to be a new person in Christ, "in the world, yet not of it." This is Luther's primary concern.

### III. COLONIAL METHODISM

#### Colonial American Worship Styles

Colonial American religions are another example of the secular meeting sacred in a creative way. In colonial religion there were wide spectrums of patterns inviting worship participation. On one extreme were the Catholics, with their physical actions, their sung responses, and the drama of the liturgy. On the other end was the simple exhortation, preaching and teaching worship of the radical German reformed groups. In between fell the majority of the colonial protestant religions.

To the Puritans, the only criterion for worship was the Word of God. Many, but not all of them eventually exceeded the reformed tradition of the continent in their hostility toward prescribed forms of worship. A few even refused the Lord's prayer and some early Baptists got so carried away that they even dispensed with the Bible. Kneeling in Puritan worship was thrown out as the "badge of the Anti-Christ" (i.e. the Anglican clergy), and it was categorically stated that "all liturgies, as such, are false worship."<sup>67</sup> The service consisted of readings, psalm singing, a sermon and repeated



prayers. For communion, the people were served by the minister in their seats at the communion table, following the simple model of the Last Supper.<sup>68</sup> The service spoke of quiet dignity and intense concentration. Over 90% of the physical action of reading, speaking and moving was done by the presiding officers. The laity's part was to concentrate on their relationship with God, hopefully free from distractions.

The Dunkards as laity were perhaps the most totally involved in worship in the colonies. These worship participants practiced foot-washing, the kiss of peace and the right hand of fellowship as well as the widespread acts of hymn singing, communion, baptisms, and preaching.<sup>69</sup> The Mennonites and Moravians also participated in many of these lay-involving rites.<sup>70</sup> Of special note are the Moravians, where lay involvement in hymns produced such excellent music that their songs far surpassed any other colonial church effort.<sup>71</sup>

The Anglican church in the colonies was from the beginning a struggling missionary effort. It had not felt compelled to come to the new world to escape persecution or to seek religious freedom. It came instead with a "favored son" relationship under the royal charters of the crown colonies. In areas where there were no competing churches and an aristocracy to support it, the Anglican church was transplanted very successfully. A description of just such a congregation in Virginia is given to us through Philip Bruce, in Social Life of Virginia in the 17th Century. He writes:

. . . for a few hours, the parish church was a centre of overflowing life. If the services were in progress, there was the large congregation listening to the words falling

from the lips of the clergyman, or joining in the singing of one of those immemorial psalms which required no instrumental music to increase their impressiveness; and if the services had ended there were the groups of persons within the edifice and while in the surrounding thickets horses, impatient to carry their masters and mistresses home, were neighing and stamping the ground. An hour later the character of the whole scene changed, the church building was closed in door and window; not a man or horse was to be observed; and the silence was only broken by the occasional cry of a wandering bird, or the bark of a squirrel. And so it continued until on the following Sunday the church doors were thrown open again.<sup>72</sup>

The actual service consisted of the kneeling, standing and reading of prayer-book responses as we shall see in the next section.

In conclusion, it can be said that most worship services in the new world were social occasions as well as worship occasions. In fact the three most important public occasions in the social life of the southern colonies were the meeting of the congregation at the parish church, the general muster of the militia, and the gathering on the monthly court day at the county court house.<sup>73</sup>

Another interesting sidelight of this period's worship was the widespread fine levied in many of the colonies for non-attendance of worship. All the people of the entire parish were required to assemble every sabbath morning and if you missed a day you would be charged accordingly. As a result of this considerable penalty for remaining away, few who were without a good reason for absence failed to attend.<sup>74</sup>

Participation therefore, was part of the culture that existed in the colonial worship of the new world. It is onto this stock that the scion of a spreading Methodist movement was grafted.

### Early American Methodist Worship and Meetings

John Wesley's tradition was Anglican. He had grown up an Anglican and was ordained an Anglican. It stands to reason that the first place to look for influences on Methodist Worship would be in the formal Anglican Liturgy.

Bishop Cranmer the writer and translator of the Book of Common Prayer, indicates that liturgy confronts humans and that liturgy requires them to "own up" to being creations of God.<sup>75</sup> Liturgy needs to be uniform, consistent throughout the whole church, because a person before God is not an individual, but becomes a member of the church, gathered to pay homage to God. Individuality is lost on the liturgical level as liturgy is being done for humans by priests (underlining mine).<sup>76</sup>

In comment on these remarks of Bishop Cranmer's, I would have to start out agreeing with the statement about confrontation. Liturgy does indeed confront, not only in word (preaching), but in action (communion and baptism), and in spirit (transcendence). However, it is easy to see that the free democratic spirit of the new world would not rest easy with the uniform, de-individualization of "common" worship. We see here the situation we have noticed throughout the historical periods we are studying. The authorities of the church are out of touch with the demands of the secular culture upon the believer. Anglican liturgy was obviously not a place to exercise lay freedom of choice.

In actual participation of the Anglican liturgy, the laity

was directed by the rubberics of Cranmer's Book of Common Prayer. They were directed to sit for the Epistle, stand for the Gospel, kneel for the prayers, the confession and the litany,<sup>77</sup> stand for the Gloria Patri, bow at the name of Jesus and give short responses (amen, Lord have Mercy, etc.) where required. It was also normal to stand for the hymns and psalms and creed.<sup>78</sup> Where the laity were not instructed, they had a tendency to sit.<sup>79</sup> The only part left open to the worshiper was the preparation of oneself before the service. The service always included communion on Sundays, and prayer services (also pre-written) during the week.

John Wesley, in recommending this service to the newly ordained ministers of the American Methodist in 1784, said:

I believe there is no liturgy in the world either ancient or modern language which breathes more of a solid scriptural, rational piety than the common prayer of the Church of England.<sup>80</sup>

It is interesting to note that when Wesley sent instructions he deemed some slight changes necessary. These changes include the omission of the Holy Days and Saint's days that he judged unnecessary, the omission of most of the Psalms and some sentences, and the shortening of some other sentences.<sup>81</sup>

For Wesley, the communion worship that he sent over held a power that transcended even the clergy. It was emphasized to his lay preachers that these services should not be neglected. He writes: "The relationship with God through worship cannot be abridged no matter how poor the minister . . . . Church attendance is necessary!"<sup>82</sup> Additionally, Wesley felt a person should renew his covenant with God by communicating every chance he gets.<sup>83</sup>

It is easily seen that worship was to Wesley an important part of his discipline.

However there seemed to be another part of Wesley's teachings that came into conflict here. To John Wesley, the church is defined in action, that is, in witness and mission rather than by the form of worship alone. This is a biblically based concept and rests on the idea that the church is composed of those whom God has called out of the world, uniting together by necessity into distinct congregations.<sup>84</sup> God's Holy Spirit then works in and through this church of God-called persons as they continue to interact with their world. In order to accomplish this goal, the Methodist societies, bands and classes were formed.

By this time Wesley had already been profoundly influenced with the missionary zeal and personal religious sharing found in the German reformed churches.<sup>85</sup> John Wesley's groups formed their bands, societies and classes because they needed more from their religion than the Anglican church was then providing. These groups became, in a sense, religious support groups.<sup>86</sup> The bands and societies formed around John Wesley's idea of church in action and utilized prayer, praise, discussion and intense participation of the members.<sup>87</sup> There was no formal liturgy, and preaching became important to these "outside-the-church" groups for its "igniting power."<sup>88</sup>

Through these small groups, worship came to be the creation of the participants as they shared their lives, their struggles and their personal relationships to God through Jesus Christ. Lay preachers who had the "fire of the Holy Spirit" in them continued to share in the same "heart warming" tradition of John Wesley. The

unleashing of this unordained laity in exhortation and witnessing, reflected the zeal and power of the Holy Spirit in a manner similar to those Moravian meetings with which John Wesley had grown so familiar.

Encouraging this situation to develop was the fact that Anglican churches were few and far between on the frontier (even as late as 1771) and so many of the societies had to rely on their organization to sustain them. Francis Asbury, a lay preacher appointed to oversee the American colonial movement, directed the societies to meet at least every one or two weeks. In these meetings they were to participate in each other's joys and sorrows, trials and consolations; hopes, feelings and to speak, pray and sing together.<sup>89</sup> The societies were on their own and they knew it.

A typical early Methodist meeting in America would usually revolve around the coming of the lay preacher. If there was no preacher coming, the people would lead the meeting themselves. Usually the itinerant would arrive at the appropriate time the men and women separated themselves by sex and seated themselves in either an open field, a home, a rigging loft or a specially constructed "preaching house."<sup>90</sup> The service would consist of the singing of hymns, the sharing of spoken or written prayers and the preaching of the word. From time to time a "Love Feast" would occur, basically a meal with a cup of water and bread which would recall our thanks to God for food and our thanks to Jesus Christ for his life giving stream of grace. All this followed after appropriate scripture, prayers, preaching and the inevitable hymn singing. In its conclusion, testimonies would be given by the participants. This

combination of liturgy and sharing gave strength to the self-sufficient bands separated from their denominational Anglican hierarchy.<sup>91</sup>

This separation gives us a clear example of what can be done to renew and revitalize traditions and meanings gone stale because of a shifting social scene.

As was stated earlier the Methodists suffered from a lack of trained clergy on the frontier. Another reason for this lack was the threat this growing movement presented to the Anglican Bishops back home. No ordained Anglicans who were sympathetic to the Methodist cause were appointed to the colonies. Consequently, there were many un-baptized colonial born "Methodists," as well as immigrant Methodists who had never received the sacraments. Many of the lay preachers wished to offer the sacraments, and some of them did so. One such lay preacher who disregarded Asbury's ban on administering the sacraments was Robert Strawbridge. Strawbridge was an immigrant to Maryland who felt the call to put down his trade as a carpenter-farmer and become a lay preacher.<sup>92</sup> He soon was preaching to large crowds and as there were no ordained Anglican clergy anywhere near, he started baptizing and serving communion.<sup>93</sup> Francis Asbury in a letter to Nelson Reed a preacher in Baltimore, distinctly stated that the Sacrament and the Love Feast must not be combined.<sup>94</sup> But precedent had been set and a special exemption was finally voted for Strawbridge. This tension continued with the American Methodists for many years and was not really settled until 1784 when Wesley cut loose the American organization to ordain and serve the sacraments as a separate church in the independent Americas.<sup>95</sup>

The colonial Methodist combined the intrinsic confrontation of Wesley's worship services, the proclamation of the Word, and the power of participatory meetings in a vital movement of deeply committed Christians. Even though the lack of a sympathetic leadership in the Church of England, it succeeded in spreading the Word of God in the Wesleyan manner of prayer, preaching, praise and fellowship.<sup>96</sup> The key to the success of this American Methodism lies in its societies and the key to the success of the societies has been the active participation of the members with the liturgy. It is this blending of participation with liturgy that helped the Methodist movement grow, adapt and expand in the rapidly changing society of America.



## Chapter 3

### WHERE WE NEED TO BE

In order to re-create the vital worship we have been studying, two important areas have to be defined and explored: 1) the human's experience in worship, and 2) the theology of worship. So much has been written on the individual aspects of these areas that separate lengthy chapters could be written on each. Our purpose here is to try to bring these two areas together to form a wholistic theory of worship.

To help us understand what is involved in responding to God's love in this way, I am going to draw on an interpretation of the act of worship by Jack Coogan based on Suzanne Langer's Philosophy in a New Key.

#### I. WORSHIP AS HUMAN EXPERIENCE

For the human experiential analysis, we are going to look closely at worship from the viewpoint of Suzanne Langer as described by Jack Coogan. The source for this material is found in Coogan's Worship as Expressive Form.

Coogan develops worship as a very complex art form based on S. Langer's definition of art. Of special importance in this definition is the emphasis on discursive vs. non-discursive (i.e.

verbal vs. non-verbal) forms in the creation of worship. Coogan makes the point that today's contemporary worship is so "locked into" discursive (verbal) forms that many elements of human experience are lost. For Coogan, "worship happens when a number of persons participate directly in the creation of a perceptible form which directly expresses the nature of the feeling associated with experiences they have had in common."<sup>1</sup> This definition of worship derives from the attitude of Dorothea Lee that "culture is a symbolic system which transfers the physical reality, what is there, into experienced reality."<sup>2</sup> These forms or rites correspond to the depths of human feeling itself and which then can represent feeling aspects as well as conceptual aspects of the religious experience. This, it is noted by Coogan, is something that pure discursive forms cannot do.<sup>3</sup> A true work of art expresses the real nature of that feeling and also reflects the adroitness of the artist to express it. This is not to say that the artist experiences feeling any deeper than anyone else, but that s/he is much better at expressing it, giving it a communicable form.<sup>4</sup>

This humanistic definition leads us to some very desirable attributes found in a participational art event. First, it seems that there is an enhancement of the intensity of the artistic experience when participation is increased. This comes from the need to use the creative facilities each of us has in order to participate. The more these facilities are used and broadened, the deeper the participant is able to experience the art event.

Second, the participant becomes increasingly familiar with

the work. This follows simply because the participant has been in on the creative process, knows what was chosen for the art event and why and so has the fore-knowledge of what to expect. This is illustrated by the many movie-goers who "see" more depth to a film the third or fourth time around. This gives the participant an "insider's" knowledge that is unavailable to those who come in on the final phase of creation.

Third, the experience of creativity itself, by being a part of an artistic experience, can reflect more of the individual's personal experience. Creation implies the sharing of one's own viewpoint and understanding. Each person who contributed to the creation process of necessity has invented part of themselves in the art event. The more one participates the more one is involved.

Finally, participational art/worship creates and enhances relationships through sharing the creative process with others.<sup>5</sup> As individuals show more about their viewpoints and experiences, relationships grow. This sharing encourages understanding, understanding encourages trust, and trust leads to love. A very powerful and deep bond can be found by people sharing intimately with each other through the creative process.

All of these elements can be seen to have been critical to the historical examples of worship we studied. Intensity of experience was a trait that was shared by the early Christians, the Reformers, and the Colonial Methodists. Familiarity with the work enables deeper understanding and touches the theme of edification found in all three examples. The third aspect of increasing the

opportunities for greater personal involvement and sharing was reflected by the coming together nature of the early Christian worship and Methodist worship, and is even found in the reformers worship though to a lesser degree. The fourth attribute of increased personal relationship come from any group re-creation or creation of an art form and has its greatest examples in the symbolic Christian actions of baptism and the Eucharist. All of these attributes contribute to the level of understanding that the participant holds. These art works stretch the individual and encourages personal growth.

The kind of human pictured here is an interacting, wholistic, participating person within a community of supportive persons.

## II. JOHN COBB'S CHRISTIAN UNDERSTANDING OF THE HUMAN EXPERIENCE

For our directive valves, we now turn to the Structure of Christian Experience by John Cobb.

For Cobb, spiritual development<sup>6</sup> begins with the assumptions of a supportive and instructive community based on ethical law. The first necessary condition of a Christian is an initial faith, a beginning trust, in God and God incarnate, Jesus Christ. This

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<sup>6</sup>The evolution of spiritual existence in response to eternal truth has been a topic of discussion by such thinkers as Alfred North Whitehead, Teilhard DeChardin and John Cobb. Current thought of this development was recently expressed by Cobb in his lectures "A Christian Understanding of Man." It is from this source that the following ideas of spiritual development are drawn.

initial faith is the commitment that is necessary to be Christian. This act of faith comes from an awareness of the limitations of the human condition. The seeker may not have a complete understanding of "faith" but must act on the basis of complete trust if s/he ever hopes to find out. From these basic assumptions, the seeker comes to a series of realizations about cosmic truth and it is these realizations that form the "process" of spiritual maturity. (Needless to say, action must follow from these realizations else they become meaningless concepts.)

After the first realization that there is a God worthy of trust, the next realization in this process of maturity is the realization of self. The Christian discovers that s/he is a person of God, has certain traits, moves in certain patterns, and comes to understand oneself as an individual in a new way. To be a healthy individual, s/he develops self love. This identification of self is important for the next realization which is self-responsibility. This responsibility has a twofold aspect, that of responsibility of one's self and a responsibility to others. The attitude toward others comes out of the natural dependence of one on another but more importantly, it comes out of the confrontation of the seeker with the Word of God. However, the seeker soon falls into a paradoxical trap. The more one tries to help others so as to further one's own progress toward maturity, the more one becomes selfish. While one's actions are other-oriented helping ones, one's motives are in reality self-centered. As Cobb puts it, when the person struggles to get out of the quicksand of selfishness by striving to help others, they only

mire themselves more. The only salvation that can occur is if a passer-by happens to decide to help this individual out of their personal quagmire. This is exactly what happens when Christ deals with humanity's sinful and egotistic condition. Humans have no obligation on God, and so it is purely God's initiative to help. God's incarnation of unrestricted love through Jesus Christ makes the rescue from this vicious quagmire possible. A peculiar obligation is then placed on the seeker by his redeeming act of God. When the seeker realizes that one is loved for oneself, that one is given a new chance, and that one doesn't have to worry about "making it" to spiritual maturity, the self is truly transcended and the only consideration on the seeker's mind is loving God and following the will of God. People are now ends and not means. The seeker looses all selfish motives for spiritual advancement. All personal self-centered aspects of life are forgotten in the moments of absorption: God and seeker are one. The realization of totally becoming God's instrument on earth is then complete.

We could leave this discussion here but Karl Barth reminds us of the real depth of sinful human nature. In the very moment one storms the walls of the Kingdom of God, one finds oneself back outside the walls. The realization that one has finally stormed them and so gained personal ends is the downfall. Such is the paradox of seeking christian spiritual maturity. It is this fifth and last realization that sets the seeker back on the road to spiritual development with the assurance of greater peace and comfort in knowing that there truly is a Kingdom of God.

### III. INTEGRATION OF HUMAN EXPERIENCE THEOLOGY AND WORSHIP

The area of liturgical theology is the attempt to integrate human experience, theology and worship. It is a meeting ground based not only on thought but also on the relationship of a congregation and the forms of its worship. It is a dialectic of thought and life meeting within the boundaries of christian realities.<sup>7</sup>

The nature of this interaction is multi-faceted. The worship event cannot be reduced to a theological blueprint drawn up by specialists nor to an unstructured artistic happening. In describing the worship event liturgical theology must stress the encounter between the Lord God Almighty and God's chosen people. This event is composed of the church created by God, gathered in Jesus Christ and under the direction and power of the Holy Spirit. The vessels of God's message are humans in liturgy, the action is of Word and sacrament.

Because the worship event encompasses the length and depth of the God-human experience, it is difficult to have a classified or codified description of worship. What liturgical theology can only hope to do is to give some theological understandings that help draw the boundaries of authentic christian worship. It is these boundaries that insure authenticity to christian worship.

Paul Hoon states that authentic christian worship is the "conformity of one's thought to God's Word, Jesus Christ, as the integrating reality for all liturgical reflection, decision and

practice."<sup>8</sup> It is the arrival of God's new creation in the resurrection and exaltation of Jesus Christ that determines the character of worship.<sup>9</sup> This dynamic has been present in many of the classical understandings of liturgical theology. It was this dynamic that emerged out of the early church's daily encounter with the living spirit of Jesus Christ.

The character of this classical christian worship is largely derived from the character of God and the way one conceives and talks of God. God is the first reality in worship. The existence of God is central to one's understanding of reality. This God is a living God, the ontological power of the universe, Being of beings, Holy and Eternal God that is utterly transcendent. It is this one God who is adored and acknowledged as creator. Central to this understanding is the action that once occurred in the unique person, Jesus of Nazareth, of God made flesh. It is an action that is occurring now, and shall continue to occur until the end of this age.<sup>10</sup> It is the embodiment of the Word of God. Confrontive in its present reality as well as transcendent in time to be confrontive over the sweep of history. It is the revelation of God in Jesus Christ as the truly imminent being that illuminates one's personal being and brings salvation from guilt, corruption and death. This saving event brings one the cosmic power of new birth and a relationship with God. A third part of this classical understanding of liturgical theology is the renewing and supportive presence of God's Holy Spirit. The "Wonderful Counselor" and comforter who sustains in times of crisis and need, who illuminates gifts and God-given



talents, who empowers one to walk in God's Holy will.

As a response to this great gift of grace, God expects humans to act in faith, adoration, commitment and action. God expects a response of obedience and service, a response modeled on the life and sacrifice of Jesus Christ. It is a response of hope: hope in the past, hope of the present, and hope for the future in an eternal relationship with God.

Classical worship patterns have been based on this understanding of the Trinity and have called the believer into appropriate responses. Isaiah 6, though not specifically christian, gives a pattern of worship that has been used for hundreds of years by the christian church. It calls one to:

- 1) focus on God, 2) recognize humans as sinners,
- 3) accept personal forgiveness of sin, 4) hear the call of God, 5) respond in thanksgiving, 6) offer self, and
- 7) claim the assurance of God's blessing and guidance.<sup>11</sup>

Another classical shape is the shape of the Synaxis-

Eucharist:

Lessons and sermon, offering, prayers of thanks, breaking of the bread that symbolizes Jesus Christ and the communion distribution to the church.<sup>12</sup>

Still yet another pattern, the service of morning prayer in the Book of Common Prayer of the Anglican Church follows the pattern of:

Scripture, confession, absolution, praise, text scripture, creed, sermon, closing prayers of thanksgiving, intercession and benediction.<sup>13</sup>

It is common for these patterns to end up being a string of barely related gospel nuggets with each element proclaiming a part or all of the gospel. This results in a service that has no over-all

artistic direction or understanding. Opening scripture and prayers become standardized as do praises and benedictions. The only room for change is in hymn tunes and sermonic presentations. We can broaden the effect of such worship by incorporating the lessons we have learned from Langer/Coogan and Cobb.

Christian worship as seen by Langer/Coogan is that symbolic system for integrating and expressing christian reality. Of necessity it needs to be wholistic and connected. It brings the present day lives of the people and interprets God's Word to them. Worship then starts where the people are, with their perceptions and understandings, and confronts them with the understanding of the world as seen from God's eyes. When this worship interaction becomes a priority, chosen as a recurring act of faith, the intensity of the experience is heightened. Understanding and knowledge come from increasing exposure and familiarity. The individual discovers and begins to co-create the promised new life with God and the body of Christ. The relationship of believers grows as the individual grows. The total life of the corporate body of Christ is interwoven with the personal life of the believer, transcending and enfolding the lives of its separate members. The total body becomes essential to the individual's growth. Ultimately, the quality of life in this total body depends on the extent in which each person is open to God and God's direction for personal action.<sup>14</sup>

This view of the God-Human interaction corresponds to the one described by Cobb. The one difference is the statement of the

pre-existent God as the starting point rather than human experience. They then correspond as they talk of each person responding to the presence of God-come-to-us. This brings confession about the limitation and sinfulness of being human, confrontation with the Word of God in Jesus Christ, and response to the sanctifying call of God.

What all this describes is the interaction between God and a human being expressed corporately. Worship is not merely the exposition of christian truths set down for all to see and hear, but the celebration of the reconciling event as it touches each individual personally through the body of Christ. It is a process of interaction between humans and the Word of God. It is created with the presence of the Gospel on one hand and the presence of the living human church on the other.

In an attempt to clarify this wholistic process, the following shape of the liturgy is proposed:

1. GATHERING IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD:  
We center our worship on God when we acknowledge that God is surely in our worship.
2. RECOGNIZING WHO WE ARE:  
The people we are, our own experience, our own perceptions, imperfect as they may be, of ourselves and the world around us.
3. EXPERIENCING GOD'S WORD:  
We are confronted with God's perception of us by Jesus Christ. God's light illuminates our total being, bringing us to judgment and grace.
4. RESPONDING TO GOD'S WORD:  
As a result of the confrontation we see areas of service and mission, of change and affirmation in our lives. We seek ways to make our commitment real and trustworthy as we fulfill God's will.

In essence this shape is not much different from the previously discussed "classical" shapes. The initial awareness of God (our initiating event); the awareness of our humanity (our sinfulness and limitations); the confrontation of the Word (God's message to our situation); and our response are all the same. Where this shape differs is that specific actions or modes of communication are not stated so that the full range of artistic expression and communication present in the congregation may be utilized. The sermon may take the form of a drama or a film. The prayers may be danced or shared corporately, the responses may be acted out rather than just verbalized. By laying out the basic boundaries of authentic Christian worship we are now free to discover the means of communication that best speaks to our present culture. We are also free to select those elements of worship that enable the drama of the Gospel to be seen as a coherent whole.

This pattern is not put forward as the ultimate pattern of worship. Even if we were to discover the "perfect" worship structure, God's spirit may move in ways not planned for. What this pattern does is to merely reflect an attempt to put in simple language the message of the Gospel so that the laity of the churches may begin to understand and structure their own worship experiences. It is to this effort that we now turn.

## Chapter 4

OUR RESPONSE: THE STRUCTURE OF THE  
CHRISTIAN WORSHIP EXPERIENCE

In any attempt to structure a worship service one must note that the participants are not all at the same spiritual level of development or experiential level of feeling when they come together to worship. The early church dealt somewhat with this problem by having two services, one for neophytes and one for the instructed members. Today, adult education is the watchword of the protestant denominations with the sermon offering additional education by presenting lecture style exposition of scripture. While great ideas have been presented within these forms, a general pattern to integrate the worship experience seems to be missing. The worship format and liturgical language have been handed down almost in toto from past generations. There seems to have been little thought given to the attitudes or experiences of the worshipers vis-a-vis their modern day culture.

In addition to being structured by overwhelming discursive patterns, ministers have largely accepted the role of "boatmen" in the worship service. They would lead seekers to the promised land rather than teach them how to build their own boats and experience the journey for themselves. Consequently much of the symbolism and the teaching power of the liturgy has been lost to the worshiper. Many people attend worship only for one segment of the service,

(communion, collect, sermon, etc.), or worse yet, attend out of social pressure from their peers and families. The worship services of American denominationalism are in danger of losing all their sacred-secular integrative power.

By using the representative shape of the liturgy developed in the last chapter as a guide to a wholistic liturgy, and by incorporating a sensitivity for non-discursive participatory art forms, the church can emphasize the one aspect it holds unique from the secular world, that of christian experiential worship.

Under these guidelines, Christian worship can once again regain the power of being a unique symbolic event, communicating the Gospel of Jesus Christ to its participants. Worship in this form is an art experience never to be exactly duplicated on film, video tape, canvas, or stone. It is an "of-the-moment" art form that won't be repeated. Even if the same people join together at the same spot at the same time one week later, people's experiences will have changed, the way they hear God's Word will be changed, and their response to God's Word will have changed.

It is within this dynamic worship that the possibility of freedom and vitality in basic religious truths is seen. The structure once again becomes harmonious with the culture. The Word is once again spoken and heard! The external meanings are presented within renewed structures with the power to renew lives.

## I. THE ROLE OF THE MINISTER

To enhance this uniqueness of Christian worship it is proposed here that the stages of spiritual growth be reflected and made clearly identifiable in the worship service so that the worshipers may come and feel a part of the congregation because they were touched at their own level. They then support each other in their respective spiritual growth and participate in a pattern that could conceivably guide every moment of their lives. This is not to say that nothing of this sort happens presently, but it is a call for concerted effort to focus worship experience in a wholistic, integrative direction.

The minister has a very precise and exciting role in this structure. It is the minister's responsibility, based on study and training, to represent the traditions and eternal truths to this group of persons creating worship. The minister's role is enabler of worship creativity whose guidelines are orthodox theology and traditional worship understandings. In effect this role is just an extension of the preaching role in which the minister tries to relate scriptural truth to the congregation by way of personal experience. The difference comes as the minister guides the worship committee in creating worship by way of the group's total experiences.

This "creative process" of worship should not be construed as a demand for a radical transformation of the liturgy, but rather as an emphasis on the total experience of worship. The worship service

becomes a wholistic pattern of confrontation and grace that each and every worship can "plug into" for self-growth. Admittedly it is impossible to guarantee such an experience for everyone, but I believe this type of process would enhance personal spiritual experience by being more in touch with secular culture.

## II. TRADITION RENEWED IN WHOLISTIC WORSHIP

In implementing this process many elements being used in the "traditional" pattern of worship could be used in this "wholistic" pattern. For example: the "call to worship" is a reflection of self-realization; "confession" is feeling failure in self-responsibility; and "words of assurance" are the redeeming words of God's grace. This wholistic emphasis is not dependent on developing new techniques in the liturgy but rather is dependent on recognizing the inherent power of the total structure of worship. Once this power is recognized, it is only a matter of organizing it on the basis of addressing our current cultural situation and then using that power to live vital God-related lives.

A few obvious benefits of this structure are: 1) a repetition of spiritual growth steps each week for each participant, 2) a time in the service that hopefully speaks to each individual no matter how spiritually mature or immature, 3) experiential reminders of God's grace and judgment along with other elements of Christology, 4) all the values of participation outlined in the Langer-Coogan theory of worship and 5) continuity with tradition.



### III. A REPRESENTATIVE FORM

The structure that seems to facilitate this process allowing freedom, yet giving structure to the worship process is as follows.

1) We gather in God's presence. This section includes preliminary meditations, prelude, introit, call to worship, invocation, processional hymn and any other acts that recognize that the congregation is together and that God is present with them.

2) We discover who we are. In this section, confession and a realistic appraisal of ourselves is focused on. This might include corporate and/or private confession, words of assurance, congregational notices, intercessory prayers, pastoral prayers, creedal statements, and other acts of "image-ing" ourselves.

3) We experience God's message. By experiencing God's Word we try to understand the depth of the power and love of God. The experience may come in many different ways; scripture, listening to a sermon, watching a play, participating in a dialog or a small group discussion, seeing slides or a movie, all of these can have an impact of God's Word on us. It is up to the committee to see that the most appropriate way of communicating God's Word is used with the worshipping congregation.

4) We must Respond in Love. Here is the opportunity to make a definite commitment and/or a physical response to God's message for us. Here is the place for the acts of offering, altar calls, member reception, and to a large extent, communion. Here

also is the benediction, recessional and postlude. All these act out our response to God's message and prepare us for the future.

It should be noted that there is some overlap of sections and some parts could be placed in various spots depending on how they were used. The Lord's prayer is very flexible in this way due to the many inflections that it has. Also, depending on the content of the sermon, it too could be in different locations. Communion, used in this four-fold scheme, could be seen as starting with confession, and covering two or three parts. The guiding principle for this is to remember that worship is a process, a flow; and worship components need to be placed by their relationship to the total flow. This worship flow is seen as the consecutive actions of the gathering of a people with common beliefs but different experiential lives; a gathering to join together to share and receive the word of God in a transcendent framework; and a shared response by that community to actualize God's will. This community is formed so that the participants may better understand their God and their response. With this understanding, decisions for the placement of the various elements of the service become simple.

In outline form,<sup>1</sup> this worship form may be broken down like this:

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<sup>1</sup>Note: This form gives suggestions of worship actions under traditional nomenclature. Some actions are listed more than once. Some actions can be moved from section to section depending on what relationship they have to the wholistic sense of the service.

- I. WE GATHER IN GOD'S PRESENCE ... (A statement of awareness of  
the power and initiating love  
of God as we come together.)
- Instructions/rehearsal
- Prelude
- Call to worship
- Invocation
- Congregational songs
- Presentations of message
- By Choir, dance, film, spoken, etc.
- Prayers ... Lord's, etc.
- Words of Assurance
- Psalms, Gloria
- II. WE DISCOVER WHO WE ARE ... (A careful, hard look at  
ourselves.)
- Call to confession, Confession
- Eucharistic Confession
- Announcements
- Invocation
- Prayers of the community/Joys and Sorrows
- (Petition, intercession, Lord's, etc.)
- Congregational songs
- Presentation of message (.....)
- Affirmations of Faith, Gloria
- Psalms
- III. WE EXPERIENCE GOD'S WORD ... (What is God saying to our  
situation?)
- Words of Assurance, Prayer of Consecration
- Scripture/other historical witness
- Sermon/presentation of message (drama, film, etc.)

Other "teachings"

Psalms, songs

IV. WE RESPOND TO GOD'S MESSAGE IN LOVE ... (What are we going to do about it?)

Presentations of message (....)

Offering (plus music?), Prayers of Humble Access

Doxology, Psalms, Songs

Prayer of dedication, affirmations of faith

Communion/Baptism (How is it to be done?)

Call to commitment/membership/ confirmation

Benediction

Fellowship

#### IV. GUIDELINES AND CAUTIONS

In implementing this form with the worship committee, the pastor may come to the group with a specific need, illuminated by a biblical understanding. It is the planning group that takes this concern and creates the "wholistic" worship service. How well that concern is linked into the culture depends on how well the planning group understands the total event of worship, its overall process, and the different alternatives available within the worship form.

There is also a caution in using these forms because it takes some doing to get a congregation open and involved enough to completely use them. This whole process should start where the congregation is, in their present forms and not where the minister thinks they are. Changes need to be understandable to all. It is

important to explain to the congregation all changes. The congregation needs to be educated quite thoroughly about this free mode of worship as it takes quite a bit of creative commitment to keep it going week after week. As much as running a weekly Christian Education effort. Finally, the minister needs to be open and accepting to the congregation's decision as to what style of service is most appropriate for them. If after the process of study, creation and expression, a congregation reaffirms a "traditional" worship experience, then that is the most authentic experience for that congregation and that style should be used. Nothing could be worse for worship than transplanting a liturgy from one congregation to another just because the minister finds it more "relevant" or "appropriate." Liturgical parts are not mass produced pieces that are interchangeable between churches, but are parts of an organic whole which must be "owned" by each individual congregation. As such the worship events are always growing and changes as the congregation grows and changes.

One theological objection needs to be dealt with: Can we manipulate the Holy Spirit and God's saving grace? Are we not removing the initiative from God in reaching people and therefore restricting God's freedom? No, we are not. Needless to say, worship creation is what ministers and worship leaders have been doing for many hundreds of years, but the real answer to this question lies in one's ability to place oneself in a position to "experience" God's word. This is what personal freedom of choice is

all about and that in turn is what christianity hinges upon. In structuring the worship service on this pattern of growth we are endeavoring to place ourselves in the most favorable "listening" position by using all of our senses. We "hear" the word of God and are therefore transformed into instruments of God through our response. We cannot even attempt to assume that we control the actions of the Holy Spirit. All we can assume is that there is a Holy Spirit, a Son proclaiming grace and love, and a Father Creator worthy of our trust and adoration. We do this by grace and in faith.

## Chapter 5

INTRODUCING LAY PARTICIPATION IN WORSHIP  
CREATION TO THE CONGREGATION

The goal of this section is to identify and summarize the usable concepts in worship creation and then apply them to a local church situation. What follows is a distillation of previous input and the use of these ideas in a worship workshop. What this means is that we have here a detailed plan for working with the congregation, giving step by step direction and insights so that any local church, given the necessary level of desire and enthusiasm, may gain the basics to create its own worship experience.

To begin, we must look at our own religious worship practices and try to construct a pattern of ritual to deal with the particular tension that modern-day secularization causes. In this effort, a primary is on the integrity of our worship. We need to be mindful of the historic efforts and truths previously discussed. It is on this revealed reality of universal truths our faith rests.

Proceeding with our task, three areas have to have special attention.<sup>1</sup> We must first see that imagination is free to deal with the new environment that is constantly being created around us. Also, we must guard the corporate nature of worship so that it can reflect the important social aspect of our creation. In this effort we need to be especially sensitive to ways that honestly express feelings and

empathy for each other in the liturgy experience. And thirdly, we need a language style that can be remembered, reused, and which grows in the process of use. With these concerns in mind we can state our definition for worship.

Worship needs to consist of epochal events, (the real, lived moments of persons), transformed corporately into meanings and culture for a people, by those same people.<sup>2</sup>

It is the changing of the personal into the transpersonal: the immediate into the transtemporal.<sup>3</sup> It is a unifying experience where humanity centers itself with the whole of creation, with God, not as an object but as an observer/participant in God's process of the cosmos. Attention should be focused on primary actions of life, death, and resurrection, and the people of God need to use whatever familiar language that can best get them to live and to understand those actions.<sup>4</sup>

It is easy to see that this worship would be concerned about having a direct bearing on people's lives and would also strive to create distinctive features that would clarify its relationships to other parts of their society. In this way it would be integrated with human life as well as integrate it.<sup>5</sup> Worship, in short, is the human response of centering down, trying to comprehend one universe, and searching for God's meaning in that universe.

## I. THE WORSHIP FORMATION PROCESS

What would this look like? How would it be created? I believe it would start from the creative use of both spontaneity and



tradition. It would be composed of an awareness to God and a sufficient knowledge of history, as well as having the properties of spontaneity in creation and universal relevance to human life. All this means that the actions would need to be authentic and truthful to the creation processes of our living triune God.<sup>6</sup>

This would translate into the local church as follows. A group of lay persons would be responsible for structuring the form of the worship experience on the preceeding principles. They would be a cross section of the congregation and they would meet with the minister to "create" the worship form. This group would work with the following principles well in mind:

1) Spontaneity: the opportunity that an informal structure has that allows room for growth and change from time to time to reflect the changes in the congregations' individual and corporate lives. Some content parts may change weekly to reflect the current week's experience (i.e. music selections, call to worship, invocation, confession, words of assurance, bidding and intercessory prayers, pastoral prayer, sermon, doxology, and benediction), while other content selections may change less frequently (scripture, prayer of consecration, prayer of humble access, words of invitation, and prayer of thanksgiving). This spontaneity allows the worship experience to be "open" and flexible to meet the current lived needs of the congregation.

2) Contemporaneousness: in style, language, and resources

for symbols. All of the actions and meanings used should be framed in such a way as to communicate the experience of the Gospel and the response of humanity as clearly and unequivocally as possible. Only if the participants understand what they are doing can they realistically hope to have a faithful experience of worship.

3) Creativity: by the congregation in "filling out" the worship structure. The participation of the congregation is essential in the pre-planning as well as the "event" stage to give the input of spontaneity and current symbols. A vast reservoir of relevant human experience is lost if just the minister and choir director prepare and lead the worship service. A vital, excited, creative group of lay people is needed to keep the worship from becoming like stale bread, stiff and tasteless. In this way the worship becomes organic to the community and grows out of the weekly, monthly, yearly, experiences of that local congregation. The planning group should have a say in deciding actions, styles, and all other means of communicating the Gospel.

4) Theological Input: based on the Christian heritage, is the minister's responsibility. The minister is to come to the congregation (represented by the worship planning committee) with a biblically based concern that is related to Christian life today. This function is granted to the minister by the congregation. It is understood that they are allowing this person who has felt a call from God, who has been recognized by his/her peers, to spend more time in

study and research than they themselves could. The minister, in turn, helps them "do theology" both in their own lives and in and through the worship service. It is through planning this service with the laity that the whole congregation is reached. Faithfulness to the Christian tradition with a sound theology is therefore a necessary condition of the ministry. Further, it is in facilitating the people's awareness of God's presence to the people that the minister defines his/her own total role. In other words, the minister tries to interpret the meanings of the Christian Faith so that the laity can understand, incorporate, and commit themselves to that faith.

5) Flow is the total integrated nature of the service.

Worship is an art form unlike any other art form. It is created by the people who come to worship and cannot be re-created in any other place or time. Each element reinforces and leads to the next. The opening meditation ties in with the total message as does the invocation, confession, sermon, and benediction. Each part is seen in the light of the mood it creates and the message it gives. The crucial question in judging which parts under consideration should be kept or rejected is, "Does this act/statement help us understand God's Word in the worship experience of this Sunday?" Nothing can be left out if it is a vital part to the experience, nothing can be left in if it is extraneous to the flow of the central message

The minister, as noted before, brings to the planning meeting

a specific need, illuminated by a biblical understanding. It is the planning group that takes this concern and creates the "wholistic" worship service based on that concern. How well that concern is linked into the culture depends on how well the planning group understands the total event of worship, its over-all process, and the different alternatives available within the worship form.

All this preparation comes together at the appointed hour, not as a show or presentation of worship, but with the mind that the total congregation will use the form set up by the worship committee and create the total worship experience using the guidelines of the planned form as their common starting point and common working materials. The worship service is then not something that is completed before the hour of the gathering, but is actually created by all present, an art form like no other, never to be duplicated or repeated at any time. It uniquely reflects that congregations' celebration of life with God at that instant.

With this type of total participation, true worship occurs. It's a partly encouraged, but nevertheless spontaneous celebration within the corporate structure facilitated by the minister. The lived moments of the lives of the worshipers are held up to become epochal instants and are transformed, transcended to become the meanings and culture of a religious people. This is where a person can reinterpret and reassimilate not only his inherited religion but his whole life. This is how I believe the unifying nature of worship can be actualized in a secular society.

## II. THE WORSHIP WORKSHOP

The case study selected to illustrate this thesis was the La Habra United Methodist Church Worship Commission. This Commission wanted to have a worship workshop built around a growing interest in their congregation about worship.

They were very anxious to improve the quality of their worship experiences, and wanted to help people broaden their scope as to what meaningful worship is to them. This situation arose out of a tension between "traditional" or "formal" worship being challenged by a group of people asking for a more "contemporary" or "informal" style. The Church is a medium to large Church (about 900 members) and is intergenerational in nature as well as pluralistic in church related interests. It was hoped that such a worship workshop would strengthen them as a community.

It was decided that the main goal of the event was to excite and train lay persons in how to create worship.

In the planning phase, the team leader met with the worship commission three times to prepare and structure the event. These meetings were to find out where they were as a group and as a church with respect to their understanding of worship; to provide the biblical input from I Corinthians 14:26 (RSV), "What then my brothers (and sisters) . . . . Let all things be done for edification," and finally to structure the Saturday workshop itself. The resource leaders for liturgy/poetry writing, dance, music, audio visuals,

banners, and "message" were drawn from the local congregation in an effort to develop local talent. They were given ideas and asked to share these ideas. All efforts were made to model the worship commission's interaction with the team leader as the future worship creation committee would interact with the pastor(s).

The goal set for after the event was the planning of one or two church "seasons" of worship events.

The EVENT<sup>7</sup> took on this form:

#### SATURDAY MORNING:

I. 9:00 a.m. Leader's meeting (drawn from local church, meeting with workshop Team Leader) in Sanctuary.

##### A. Explain necessities for creativity

1. Intuition -- on "background" knowledge.  
Symbol -- walls of Sanctuary.
2. Records -- where we've been. Especially short and long term objectives so we can evaluate progress.  
Symbol -- Bible.
3. Health (mental, spiritual, physical) -- so we may operate at full potential; if weak or poor, needs some healing.  
Symbol -- Communion Rail.
4. Constructive Criticism:
  - don't be afraid of it
  - don't over value your ideas
  - ideas only have meaning if can be realistically actualized.

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<sup>7</sup> While this Event is literally compressed into a one morning and afternoon session, the same workshop format has been used very successfully over a two and three day span. In the case of the three day workshop, we started on Friday evening and ended up planning the Sunday worship experience. The Choir was involved from the very beginning and the Church Secretary came in at 10:00 p.m. Saturday to mimeograph the bulletin for the next morning. It was a very successful workshop.

Symbol -- Pulpit.

5. Tools -- there is a tool available for every problem.  
Symbol -- the Congregation is your tool ready for use.
6. Experience -- you bring experience right now. We have a tendency to get more knowledgeable, less sensible as we get older, need to keep in balance; knowledge and feeling.

|                                    |       |                                   |
|------------------------------------|-------|-----------------------------------|
| <u>learn later</u><br>(reflection) | ----- | <u>experience now</u><br>(living) |
|------------------------------------|-------|-----------------------------------|

Symbol -- YOU.

7. Definition (of situation) -- ask "What's happening?," not, "What can I do about it?" (That gets the cart before the horse, implies immediate responsibility, triggers false starts out of isolation -- such a narrow path!)  
So ask -- "What is the real problem in this situation?"  
Symbol -- Prayer.

#### B. 9:15 a.m. Questions and Agenda

Task for the Day:

1/2 day defining the problem ("What's really happening here?")

1/2 day creating a solution -- learning lab.

"What it will look like at the end of the day will be up to you!"

#### C. 9:20 a.m. Loosening up -- creative exercise

Think of something you can do inside this room that happens to be a Sanctuary.

- if someone does your idea -- think of another real fast!
- consider us actors in the round.
- do it as you speak it and keep talking about it until you've completed it.

Example: "I can run up to the pulpit, count noses, and win your hearts by an engaging speaking manner!"

#### D. 9:29 a.m. Prayer for the day, leaders, and Church.

### II. WORKSHOP:

- A. 9:30 a.m. Name Tags, getting acquainted and informal singing if natural to the group.

- B. 9:40 a.m. Film "Search" (no introduction given).

Theme: Where is God. (This film is a series of interviews

with visual illustration of where different people find God.)  
(Six minutes.)

\*Possible alternate film: "Life in a Tin Can"

Small groups of five for five minutes

Questions:

- Where do you find God?
- What are high spots in your life?
- Special relationships?
- Activities?

9:50 a.m. Share in large group

Post on news present all "highs" of the groups --

- "How many have felt this way in Worship? When?"
- "This is the stuff worship is made of -- your experiences with God!"

Opening Prayer.

C. 10:00 a.m. Input

1. History of Christian Worship Covering: Early Christian, Reformation, Wesleyan Societies/frontier U.S.A.
2. Paul's view of Worship: I Cor. 14:26, Edification of all believers by each sharing the "gifts in creative ways."
3. Authentic Worship - Definition:  
Authentic Worship is trustworthy, acceptance, worthy, and conforming to reality.  
Authentic Worship Reflects:
  - God cares for us, loves us
  - Even in our sin we are not alone
  - God's power through Jesus Christ proves that love offers us new hope and life
  - God has taken the first, initiating step towards us, our response is both personal and cooperate.
  - A "witness" to our faith, our trust, as with corporate expression creating worship (music, teaching, preaching, banners, etc.)

Questions

10:20 a.m. Break

D. 10:30 a.m. Releasing the creative process

1. Film: "Stretching Out." (No introduction.)



(An abstract film symbolizing the difficulties of accepting and using new ideas in a creative way.)  
Time: Four minutes

2. Small group sharing - five minutes.  
"What does it mean?"
3. Input - "The Holy Spirit gives Freedom"  
Banner: Word "YES" on a field of "no's"  
God's YES to the World's NO's.
  - a. FIVE Freedom's<sup>8</sup> 2:
    - (1) Freedom to be O.K. (Freedom from self-degradation and egotism.) "God don't make junk!" "You're O.K.!"
    - (2) Freedom to be successful. (Freedom from failure.) O.K. to fail, O.K. to succeed. Not labeled because of one or another. Promise of forgiveness no matter what, to release creative potential!
    - (3) Freedom to be discontent. Don't have to like things the way they are! "Constructive discontent is seed for creativity. As Christians--do it sensitively and with concern, but do it!!"
    - (4) Freedom to be Whole. A Whole Person. Feeling and thinking, waiting and acting, faith and acts.
    - (5) Freedom to be innovative. Word of Gospel: You are a new person, old habits can change.
  - b. Blocks to Creativity ... FEAR
    - (1) Fear of ...
      - making mistakes,
      - being seen as a fool,
      - being criticized,
      - being misused,
      - being alone (myth - a person with an idea is a minority of one, minority only because haven't shared.),

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<sup>8</sup>Note: Christian response to fear is prayer, meditation, inspiration, discussion (but do we really use it? How many Christian meetings that got hot and heavy were stopped for a word of prayer?).

- disturbing traditions,
- being associated with taboos,
- losing security of habits,
- losing the love of the group,
- of being an individual.

(2) "Fear is natural and normal! Our emotions try to tell us something!" O.K. to fear -- to feel afraid, but it's how we cope or respond to that fear that matters!

May feel reluctant, anxious, unprepared, this encourages fear to grow, wasting creative energy.

We can step back -- feel our feelings, but then try to decide what is most appropriate action for the situation.

c. Repeat Movie "Stretching Out" Time: Four minutes.

Small group feedback: Time: Five minutes.

Large group question: "Was there any difference in feedback?"

d. Worship Formation Process:

Working outline of Worship Service:

I. We Gather in the Presence of God.

II. We Discover Who We Are.

III. We Experience God's Word.

IV. We Respond to God's Word.

e. Today's Theme: I Corinthians 14:26.

Scripture to structure a service around.

Background: Chapter on spiritual gifts, Paul stresses integrity of mind and Spirit. Key words for Paul: "Decently" and "In Order."

E. 11:30 a.m. "The Idea Smorgasbord"

Six rooms were set up with resources to cover the following areas:

1. Sermon or "Message" time,
2. Liturgy - Poetry and Prose,

3. Music,
4. Banners,
5. Sacred Dance, and
6. Audio Visuals.

Previously selected leaders drawn from the Church were on station, prepared to give a short ten minute "exposure" to the possibilities of using each of these areas in worship.

The larger group was divided up into six parts and each part sent to a different room. At the end of ten minutes, a bell was rung, the people went to the next group in succession, with those at group six going to group one. The leaders then repeated the ten minute "exposure" talk. The bell was rung five more times until all had been exposed to all six areas.

F. 12:30 p.m. Lunch Break and Reassignment.

As soon as the blessing was given and the food distributed, I Corinthians 14:26 was read again and participants were invited to take their lunch, return to the room that held the most interest for them and begin work to take that scripture and make its message the central message of a worship service. We would then use that worship service as our closing for the day.

G. 1:30 p.m. The Worship Experience was held after a brief planning session where the order of service was decided upon. This was based on the "working outline of the Worship

Service" and how they thought the individual parts would best fit in. The service took approximately one hour. The Pastor was given the responsibility of keeping everything "in order" and became the facilitator for the group's worship experience, guiding and directing it.

### III. EVALUATION

Immediately after the event three questions were asked:

1. What would you change?
2. I enjoyed \_\_\_\_\_ (fill in)
3. I learned \_\_\_\_\_ (fill in)

The most frequent response to the first was "Have it spread over two or three days!" This indicated an excitement and enthusiasm that wanted to give this activity more priority in their life. As such, it fulfilled the first part of the goal decided by the Worship Commission. The next two questions elicited responses that indicated new found resources and potentials within themselves. All of this led to the formulation of an active, creative Worship Commission.

In negative responses, some felt the input was too long, the "Smorgasbord" instructions were confusing, the evaluation was anti-climatic and specific problems of their Church were not focused on. Most of these criticisms can be solved by being more careful in techniques (i.e. trimming lecture, using written evaluations rather than oral, being careful with instructions), while the need to be more specific is best left for a regular Worship Commission meeting

where the time and focus would not be limiting.

To sum up the experience of the day, it excited and encouraged the people to become involved in the Local Church Worship Commission. It was so structured as to give the Pastor a central role in whatever would be created, but also allowed a tremendous amount of creativity and involvement by lay people in the formulation of their worship experience.



## POSTLUDE

We have dealt with worship, humans in artistic creation, and a theological understanding of the human experience. All of this comes together in "the church," the body of Christ, the fellowship of the faithful. The Christian church is comprised of a number of individuals who have joined together because each has had a similar religious experience. In the Christian church, the religious experience must in some way reflect an awareness of God realized through their special relationship with Jesus Christ. This special personal relationship is the catalyst that makes such a realization of God possible. These faithful individuals join together for mutual enrichment and spiritual growth by doing God's will. This is the Christian Church.

This similar religious experience gives the members in the church a common bond which they need to strengthen each time they meet or the group will fall apart. Worship is one of the best methods of strengthening this bond. To be effective in this role, worshippers must be reminded of their relationship with God, and of the relationships with each other. This purpose of worship follows the Great Commandments given by Christ:

"Thou shalt love

The Lord thy God

with all thy heart,

and with all thy soul,

and with all thy mind . . .

Thou shalt love

thy neighbour

as

thyself . . ."

(Matt. 22:37-39) KJV.

Finally, the worship service can provide a setting for further religious experience, so as to help the individual as well as the group in spiritual growth.

The object of this process worship we have discussed is God, but as with the early gatherings of Christians, so with our present meetings, the questions of HOW to worship God is highly important. In our "wholistic" services we can see the same content that was present in those early gatherings, even if the form and style is dramatically changed.

It seems non-discursive participation of worshipers tends to give way to quiet "absorption" and distance-ing. I believe this lack of artistic participation is hindering the very life blood of our worshipping congregations.

We have seen that it was this participation that was the strength that sustained the Methodist colonial spirit. This strength resided in the organized societies, classes and bands of frontier America. The itinerant ministers provided the spark that kept the organization moving, yet they did not stay around long enough for the organization to become pastor-centered. Formal Anglican worship, by neglect and absence was replaced by the highly participatory class or



quarterly meeting. As a result we have seen that participation in worship became the mode rather than the exception. In this sense colonial Methodism was exactly opposite the Methodism of England. In England, Anglican worship services abounded and greatly outnumbered the Methodist societies. In the colonies, the societies proliferated and the Church of England as a liturgical body was scarce.

Out of this beginning has come a struggle between these two elements in Methodist Worship: formal vs. informal, participation vs. presentation, sharing by the minister (priest) vs. sharing by the attending members. It continues today as a struggle of observation vs. involvement in creating the service. Unfortunately, the struggle has often been won by "tradition" rather than by conscious decisions based on sound theology. Whatever style happened to start first was usually the style that lasted. As late as 1827 the issue caused a tremendous split in the ranks of Methodism. The Rev. Richard Watson wrote at that time that the "Superintendent Minister alone (underlining mine) must regulate worship, the people had no right to meddle in it."<sup>1</sup> Today we see and feel the results of such thinking: masses of people, disaffected by the liturgy, coming only to hear a good sermon or coming merely out of habit. A "dull" attitude towards worship is present that finds no joy, no celebration, no personal confrontation in the liturgy as was Cranmer's desire in the 17th Century. The struggle needs once again to come out into the open.

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<sup>1</sup>Townsend, New History of Methodism, page 31.

For the Methodist Church liturgical renewal means, in my opinion, renewal of lay participation. It was from this strength that Methodism first made an impact in the highly individualistic colonies, and it is on this strength that any renewal movement in today's pluralistic society needs to be based. This includes a careful explanation of all the aspects of the sacraments and the other worship forms. This also includes an open invitation for people to be involved in creating and designing their forms of worship with the just-lived moments of their lives. This sharing of each other, in confrontation with God, can and ought to happen in worship as this is the basic definition of worship.

If Wesley's genius can again be reconstituted by a formal liturgical process that encompasses the sharing, preaching and confrontation of the gathered community before God, then worship renewal will be a reality. This is the challenge of the past that confronts us today.

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## Chapter 5

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## POSTLUDE

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